

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN IN AMMA DARKO'S *BEYOND THE HORIZON*

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the issue of domestic violence in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*. Domestic violence is an important issue because it is a worldwide phenomenon. Hence the necessity to carry out this study in order to find out its ins and outs through a study of the chosen novel. The methodology used falls on documentary research which includes books and internet sources, especially online articles. Feminism which aims at valorising women's image is used as the theoretical framework of this research work. The study has found that domestic violence has repercussion on women's lives. The paper recommends and concludes that patriarchal practices which encourage men to oppress, traumatise and dehumanise women in African societies should be eradicated.*

**KEYWORDS:** Domestic Violence, Repercussions, Oppress, Traumatise, Dehumanise

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### INTRODUCTION

In African societies, most women are victims of physical and psychological violence, betrayal, and neglect that affect their lives. This is known as domestic violence which is one of the major factors that favor the violation of human rights in general and of women's rights in particular. It is a humiliating and dehumanising act through which some husbands prove their masculinity. Hence the necessity to carry out this study in order to pinpoint domestic violence and its impact on women in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*. The causes and manifestations of domestic violence in the novel and its impact on the protagonist-narrator, Mara, are analyzed and discussed with a view to establishing that patriarchal practices are factors which encourage men to oppress, dehumanise and traumatize women in African societies. The purpose of this paper is to examine critically and to expose domestic violence and its impact on women through a study of the novel under study.

The theoretical framework of the research work has to do with feminism which aims at valorising women's image. The methodology used falls on documentary research which includes books and internet source, especially online articles. The pertinence of the theories and methods that I have chosen to use lies in the fact that they will induce an understanding of the theme under study and a literary appraisal of this phenomenon through a study of the chosen novel. The paper is divided into three sections, namely the causes of domestic violence against women, physical and psychological violence against women, and the impact of domestic violence on women.

## CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The main causes of domestic violence against women are their low status, the weight of patriarchal practices including the dowry or bride price system, women's economic dependence and illiteracy. Patriarchal societies bestow power and authority to men who consequently consider women as second-class citizens. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara and her husband, Akobi, come from the same village, Naka, in Ghana. In accordance with their tradition, it is Mara's father and Akobi's father who have arranged their marriage without first seeking Mara's consent or approval. Her mother tells her the 'good news' of her marriage in these terms: "'Your father has found a husband for you,' [...], 'a good man!'" (p. 4). However, Mara does not share her mother's enthusiasm. This is due to the fact that it reminds her of the situation of her sister who got married two years earlier. She states this fact in the following quotation: "All I did was grin helplessly because I clearly remembered the same good news as this that mother had given my sister two years before. Found, too, by father. And my sister was now a wreck" (p. 4). Mara's sister's predicament which has made her a wreck, as stated in this quotation, is a proof that it is the second time their father has indulged in such a mistake. The writer thus denounces the fact that people like Mara's father do not draw any lessons from past experiences so as to avoid falling into other traps in life. As E. Awitor (2013, p. 176) says: "Mara's helpless reaction and the comparison she makes with her sister who is now 'a wreck' after her marriage foreshadows her own doom."

In fact, Mara's father is more preoccupied with the dowry and money that marriage entails than with his daughters' wellbeing. Of course, Mara's father "had a different formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters, which took more into consideration the number of cows coming as the bride price than the character of the man" (p. 4). The importance of the dowry for Mara's father is highlighted as sheldaments: "A man he owed money to has come and forcefully claimed his debt in the form of eight of father's eleven goats. So my dowry came in handy" (p. 6). This quotation reveals that the dowry is meant to enable her father to pay his creditor back. As the protagonist-narrator puts it: "And then, too, he was flattered that the first Naka son with a school certificate should choose his daughter for a wife. So much so that I later learnt that drunk from palmwine and belching boisterously, he had proclaimed that he would gladly have given me away even for one goat" (pp. 6-7). Mara "was given away to this man [Akobi] who paid two white cows, four healthy goats, four lengths of cloths, beads, gold jewellery and two bottles of London Dry Gin to my family, and took me off as his wife from my little African village, Naka, to him in the city" (p. 3). It is clear that Mara's father has trivialised her because their tradition has given him the power to do so. C. Gbaguidi (2018, p. 41) refers to the African women's trivialisation by traditions in these terms:

African traditions instil into females values like unconditional love, attention, tenderness, respect, submission and availability to serve their husband, whom they take as superior to them. This tradition contributes strongly to African women's trivialisation. They are seen as objects and the weaker sex. Traditional virtues and beliefs make African women defenceless and they resign themselves to loveless and restrictive union, economic exploitation, physical and psychological violence. Those are indeed, the images of the conventional African woman in man-dominated societies.

Mara's father has sold her off to Akobi, using their tradition as a subterfuge. As a result, he has pushed her into triviality and domestic violence which is the ensuing consequence. Mara is "bought off very handsomely" (p. 7) by Akobi's father and she becomes henceforth Akobi's "wife" (p. 7). E. Awitor (2013, p. 177) rightly concludes:

Mara becomes a commodity in the hands of both families. She is put on the global economy market place. Note the use of the verbs “buy” and “give away” which connote a sort of merchandizing. Thus, woman is not a human being but a mere piece of goods. This kind of practice can be compared to slavery in the sense that girls are given away in exchange for material things or gains. Later, the girls become their husband's property. They are abused, exploited and battered. In the case of Mara, she becomes a housemaid rather than a wife.

In the above quotation, E. Awitor expatiates on the outcome of the awkward marriage that Mara's father has embarked her upon. E. Awitor (2013, p. 177) further writes: “When she is brought to the city by her husband, she finds herself in an awkward situation. She is trapped in wedlock, sharing nothing with her husband except receiving orders, worshipping and obeying him”. B. Kammampool (2017, p. 14) posits:

Darko advocates strong perspectives that critique the ways women are commodified through the various socio-cultural formations of her society. The novelist equally emphasises the necessity for reconstituting female agency, in order to survive the physical and psychological oppression engendered by male power. Far from being Akobi's wife, Mara becomes his servant, his housemaid and slave.

It is clear that the awkward circumstances of their marriage is a forerunner of the domestic violence that Mara will later undergo. This is a kind of forced marriage whereby both husband and wife are not consenting. Patriarchy is at the origin of such a situation. C. Gbaguidi (2018, p. 42) refers to patriarchy which fosters male domination over the female gender in these terms:

In Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* for instance, the auto diegetic narrator Mara suffers the diktat of patriarchy in that she has no right to choose her own partner for life. Hence, Akobi is imposed on her by her father, heavily indebted to Akobi's father. Meanwhile, Mara's elder sister suffers similar predicaments and the result is disastrous to the extent that it should be a lesson for her parents regarding marrying their daughters.

The above-mentioned quotation reveals that there is no love in the marriage between Akobi and Mara. That marriage is a mere arrangement between the two families. In such circumstances, Mara has to fulfil her husband's demands, wishes and orders. So, there is no wonder when she proves to be submissive and subservient to her husband. She justifies this fact as follows:

For instance, it was natural that after I had woken up first at dawn, and made the fire to warm up water for Akobi, and carried a bucketful of it with his spongebag to the public bathhouse for him, and returned to wake him up, to tell him his bath was ready. It was natural that I also had to stand outside while he bathed in case that some soap suds should go into his eyes and he should need me. Moreover, it was me who always carried back the emptied bucket and the bathing accessories and saw to drying his towel ready for next morning. (p. 12)

Through the foregoing excerpt, it is clear that Mara is a submissive and subservient wife. She silently endures whatever Akobi imposes on her because she has no alternative left. Akobi seems to have accepted the marriage to please his father. He does not love Mara; and Mara, herself, is aware of that fact. The only heavy burden in her heart is to ‘respect, obey and worship’ her husband to fulfil her womanliness as she laments:

It was natural too, that when he [Akobi] demanded it, I slept on the concrete floor on just my thin mat while he slept all alone on the large grass mattress. [...]. Since after all mother taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing and that was to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure. And if demands like that were what would give him pleasure, even if just momentarily, then it was my duty as his wife to fulfill them. So that even

those nights when he ordered me to sleep on the thin mat on the hard floor, even if I laid there and could not sleep and suffered a splitting headache the next day because of lack of sleep, I still regarded my suffering as part of my being a wife, and endured it just like I would menstrual pain. (p. 13)

Women are locked up in the traditional education in a patriarchal society as shown through Mara's behaviour in the above-mentioned quotation. They accept and endure everything subserviently as their 'karma' or 'fate' because their mothers have taught them to behave well from childhood. This society teaches a girl that her husband is her visible God or god in the matrimonial environment. E. Awitor (2013, p. 178) denounces the fact that Mara considers her plight as her fate as it appears in this quotation:

More often, domestic violence and its subsequent consequences are minimized and considered to be a private domain. In addition, most of the victims do not know their rights and/or dare not to complain. Mara is locked in the traditional education which assigns the domestic role to women. She accepts and endures everything subserviently as her "karma" or her "fate."

Mara has the tendency to merely relate the domestic violence that she endures at the hands of her husband, Akobi. She blindly accepts whatever he does and feigns to see nothing wrong with it. She justifies her behaviour by the teachings she has received from her parents and family elders as it appears in the following excerpt:

[...] after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing, and that was to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure. [...] I saw also as falling under 'obey and worship your husband', as my parents and the family elders stringently repeated to me at the end of the marriage rites. In other words, that, too, was for me normal. (p. 13)

The above-mentioned excerpt reveals that "Not only are women victims of this patriarchal society, but also they are their own victimizers. They perpetuate the tradition, that is, their own victimization by educating their daughters to obey the rules that nurture the inequality and the violation of women/girls' rights" (E. Awitor, 2013, p.179). However, Mama Kiosk categorically rejects Mara's subservient posture by saying: "Tradition demands that the wife respect, obey and worship her husband but it demands, in return, care, good care of the wife. Your husband neglects you and yet demands respect and complete worship from you. That is not normal" (p. 13). So, the quotation clearly shows that tradition is not strictly followed in Mara's case since her husband does not play his part as stipulated by this tradition. As a result, he resorts to domestic violence. However, Mara challenges Mama Kiosk's view about the overexploitation that Akobi heaps on her. She bears and perpetuates this ancestral norm to ensure her husband's pleasure. According to Mama Kiosk, being under this norm would make Mara 'less than a woman'. However, Mara does not see things like her. What she says in the following quotation is an illustration:

But I still wasn't going to leave Mama Kiosk spoil my marriage for me, so I said 'Mama Kiosk, I probably have eyes that see blue where you see red. But I would still not like to exchange my eyes for yours. I like my eyes as they are.' [...]. For me, not obeying and worshipping Akobi would make me less of a woman, just as having no menstrual periods would make me less of a woman. And I didn't want to be less of anything. (pp. 14-16)

The aforementioned quotation further highlights the causes of domestic violence in African societies. The background scrutiny formula locks women in domestic violence, and it predicts the key on which a marriage destiny should lie. Mara, 'a green horn Naka village girl', is astonished of her father's choice of Akobi's family, knowing their social status. She denounces his father's choice in these terms:

And he did. And made known to me that my chosen husband was the man named Akobi. [...]. And my astonishment was because of the position that Akobi's family held in the village. [...]. Akobi's father, like most men in the village was a farmer too. But, unlike most men in the village, he was an undertaker. And people fear him because he was a man who seldom issued threats but pitilessly carried out those he issued. (p. 4)

The foregoing excerpt shows that Akobi's father is a bad person. Indeed, Akobi has the same character as his father, for "The son of a gorilla must dancelike the father gorilla" (F. Nwapa, 1966, p. 51). So, Akobi has taken after his father, thus proving the saying 'Like father like son.' It is worth mentioning that a patriarchal society does not give room to reciprocal love between a young man and a young girl before marriage. Only parents' intentions are holy, and such a society teaches that: "Marriage is not merely an affair between two individuals who have fallen in love and plan to spend the rest of their lives together. It is a matter in which the lineage groups of both the man and the woman are deeply interested" (K. Gyekye, p. 78). However, love should be the *sine qua non* of marriage instead of mere selfish interests. Denouncing her predicament, Mara declares: "I don't know what is to love a man. I never learnt it because I wasn't taught. I never experienced it because I never got the chance to love before this marriage was arranged with Akobi. I only know that a girl grows up, is given to a man by her parents and she has to please the man, serve him, and obey him and bear him plenty children" (p. 86). This quotation shows that Mara has never experienced love before her unfortunate marriage with Akobi. According to the patriarchal bride price system in Naka village, as soon as Mara decides to desert her marital house, her father should refund her bride price in its integrity. So, Mara finds it impossible to dissolve her marriage with Akobi as shown in this quotation:

I abandoned the idea of announcing my wish that the marriage be dissolved, something I had been intending since I considered that the goats and the cows presented for my dowry had probably by now given birth to some more goats and cows so that father could afford to return the original without loss. And as for the bottles of London Dry Gin I could finance that myself. Then my clothes and jewellery too were left untouched and I had brought them along. But father had used the goats and cows to remarry, and he definitely was not going to agree to my wish. (p. 29)

The quotation illustrates that Mara's father has sold her handsomely like a commodity as said earlier. Her father has given her away in exchange for material gains. Thus, Mara is bound to accept being abused physically and emotionally or being turned into 'a petty toy' as her father cannot afford refunding her bride price. S. M. Burn (2011, p. 23) explains the dehumanizing character of women's plight in these terms: "When people are thought of as commodity or property, they are diminished and dehumanized and do not have the power to make their own life choice. In many cultures, a female is property-first of her father and then husband. These men decide her fate and she is expected to obey". I. A. Ngwaba (2019, p. 114) posits: "[...] objectification starts with the African tradition of disposing of one's daughter as a commodity. Women are given in exchange of goods unlike their Western counterparts." So, the physical and psychological violence that women endure as a result of the domestic violence that men exert on them is mainly due to the weight of African traditions. However, as I. A. Ngwaba (2019, pp. 113-114) puts it: "Objectification is like the two sides of a coin; women who are objectified can emancipate themselves from such slavery or accept their fate."

Some husbands consider their wives as being naive and illiterate enough to understand their exploitation. As a result, to reduce their wives' economic dependence and deceive them by giving them an economic helping hand in order to reduce their domestic expenditures. It is in this perspective that Akobi expects a repayment with interest from Mara when he lends her some money to run her trade. The issue of women's economic dependence draws their lives at the jaw of

violence. Men believe that women are worthless because they sit, awaiting their husbands to do everything for them. What Akobi tells Mara in the following excerpt illustrates this fact:

‘You foolish lazy idiot! What do you think you are sitting here all day doing nothing and yet refusing to work for Mama Kiosk. You think here is a pension house?’

[...]‘from now on you will throw Mama Kiosk’s rubbish away for her and she will pay you with foodstuffs and vegetables. And since that means you need not go to the market often, I can also save by cutting down on the daily chop money I give you, you understand?’ (p. 11)

The foregoing excerpt clearly shows that Akobi considers his wife as a worthless person simply because she does not work to earn money. Through it, the writer denounces the fact that husbands generally expect their wives to work so as to forcibly contribute their quota to the family income. This is one of the causes of domestic violence. If the husband fends for his wife who is idle, he easily dominates her and leads her to submission. In such a couple, the woman is bound to fall victim to domestic violence through physical and psychological violence. B. Kammampoal (2017, p. 3) posits:

[...] in Darko’s works, the text becomes the site to express her disgust about women’s predicament as well as their insurgencies. There is a need to explore the injustice inherent in patriarchal society, to concentrate on women as victims of patriarchal violence, and to show that even women are in part complicit in their own predicament, and finally to define the way she treats women and girls in relation to men and boys in her narratives. In the end, the social issues she projects are subsumed in the sheer power of bashing men’s social agenda.

The above-mentioned quotation reveals that Amma Darko always expresses her disgust about women’s predicament in her novels. She portrays women as victims of patriarchal violence which the women victims themselves encourage. So, the complicity of women in their predicament is absurd and emphasises their blind submission to men in general and to their husbands in particular.

## **PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Women are generally victims of the imbecility and foolishness of their husbands who perpetrate physical and psychological violence on them. They are victims of battery, ‘painful kick, slaps, grab’ that traumatise their body, burn their ears and sometimes lead them to numbness. Mara is victim of such a cruel and unfair treatment perpetrated by her husband, Akobi. Any mistake from Mara in terms of dressing, serving and gliding of tongue is sanctioned by physical violence from Akobi. Mara explains this sad fact in the excerpt below:

Initially, he used only to grumble to show disapproval, and then when that still did not bring a change, he began to act. When I didn’t bring him the bowl of water and soap in time for washing his hands before and after eating, I received a nasty kick in the knee. When I forgot the chewing stick for his teeth, which he always demanded be placed neatly beside his bowl of served food, I got a slap in the face. And when the napkin was not at hand when he howled for it, I received a knuckle knock on my forehead. (pp. 18-19)

The above excerpt reveals that Akobi has gradually started perpetrating domestic violence on his wife. Through this, the novelist intends to show how men gradually turn into monsters after their marriage. She thus denounces the fact that love and peace which are meant to follow marriage generally turn into hatred and violence. After Mara’s marriage, according to E. Awitor (2013, p. 177): “She does all the house chores and even pays all the bills. On top of this, she is mercilessly and repeatedly beaten up by Akobi. The novel is replete with various cases of mistreatment, violence, humiliation and

violations of women's rights. First of all, the reader cannot but be flabbergasted by the reaction of Akobi when Mara tells him that she is pregnant. "This quotation reveals that the novel is replete with violence, humiliation and the violation of women's rights which are all part and parcel of domestic violence. Sexual intercourses which are meant to vivify human beings' instinct bring only sadness and distress to some women because they are so violent that they may be equated with rape. For example, Mara recounts her first sexual intercourse with Akobi in these terms:

The first time he slept with me, when he started moving quicker and panting louder and sweating more, he suddenly at one stage removed himself very quickly from inside me and wetted me all over with this strange milky-white liquid coming from his manhood. At first I thought that he was sick and was throwing up through his manhood. But then he told me that it was to avoid something. (p. 16)

The aforementioned quotation shows that Akobi avoids ejaculating in Mara's vagina. As a result, Mara feels embarrassed when she discovers from Mama Kiosk that he is doing this to avoid a pregnancy which may occur. Even for serious matters like Mara's pregnancy which should normally delight Akobi, he beats her. The protagonist-narrator tells us about it in these terms:

'Akobi,' [...], 'I was by Mama Kiosk today and I told her that I haven't had my blood for two months and she says I am by all means carrying a baby.'

[...]. 'Mama Kiosk says you are pregnant?'

'Yes, Akobi,' I answered. And sat on the chair because I felt a sudden dizziness.

'Did Mama Kiosk sleep with you?' he asked, still in that disregarding tone.

I felt a cold sweat seep through my pores. I didn't answer. Then suddenly there was this angry roar of, 'Get up!' like an over-irritated boar and the next second I was up at attention on my two feet. [...]. He studied me like he was studying filth.

[...], 'And why did you get pregnant?'

[...]. 'Pardon?' I replied spontaneously, and before I knew what was happening ... Wham!

First slap ... wham! wham! wham! three more in succession. And I scurried into what had now become my favourite corner, slumping to the floor. (pp. 16-17)

Through the above-mentioned excerpt, the novelist denounces irresponsible husbands' behaviour when they impregnate their wives. She makes Akobi blame his wife for the 'unwanted' pregnancy to show how irresponsible husbands are at times. Akobi has unprotected sexual intercourses with Mara, but he does not expect her to get pregnant, which is absurd. Her psychological suffering reaches its peak when Akobi slaps her because she is pregnant. She becomes flabbergasted and wonders: "What African man got angry because his wife was carrying a baby? And the first baby at that" (pp. 16-17). The quotation shows that Akobi is a cruel person. Through his behaviour, the writer rebels against men who marry women just for sexual pleasure rather than childbirth.

Another instance of physical violence occurs in the novel when Mara has not waited to collect the things her husband has used for his bath on time from the bathroom. He severely punishes her as it is revealed in this quotation: "Just when I least expected it, he grabbed my left ear between his thumb and forefinger and, with my body slanted halfway towards him, my ears burning hot in pain, walked slowly and steadily with me back into our room. By the time he released me my left ear had gone numb" (p. 19). In addition, when Mara gives back the money Akobi lends her to begin selling hawking boiled eggs without interest as Akobi wants, he slaps her as shown in the following quotation:



We were in there alone now and the air about us was heavy. Then he turned and faced me and studied me briefly, cynically; and I sweated my first sweats of doubt. Then he snatched the money from me, counted and re-counted it, God knows how many times, and then to my utter astonishment, slapped me hard across the face. I was stunned. [...]. So this slap with its shock pain hurt me more than ever. [...].

‘What do you mean paying without interest?’ he bellowed eventually.

I didn’t know what interest was so [I] asked meekly, ‘What?’ And at the same instant I saw his clenched knuckles ready to knock pain into my forehead. (pp. 20-21)

The foregoing quotation shows that Akobi beats his wife even for insignificant mistakes. His insouciance for her leads him to prevent her from sleeping on his bed. This is a kind of psychological violence which prevents her from sleeping at night. Worse still, the mat on which she sleeps and the war she faces with ‘the mice, cockroaches or mosquitoes’ harm her body and prevent her from sleeping until day breaks. Moreover, Mara bears a physical burden through the sexual assaults that she frequently undergoes. As a matter of fact, Akobi has sexual intercourses with her without her consent. She has thus become a sex object used to fulfil his pleasure. She complains about one of the sexual assaults in these terms: “Wordlessly, he stripped off my clothes, stripped off his trousers, turned my back to him and entered me. Then he ordered me off the mattress to go and lay out my mat because he wanted to sleep alone”(p. 22). This quotation shows that Akobi really considers Mara as a sex object to satisfy his libido. The novelist uses his attitude to denounce men who use women as sex object because they do not love them. So, for Akobi, Mara is not ‘human’ enough to be offered any form of intimacy. She is a mere sex object used for masculine dictate. Akobi commodifies Mara, and C. Gbaguidi (2018, p. 44) corroborates the idea in these terms:

Indeed, in *Beyond the Horizon*, for instance, African women are portrayed as sex commodities. The domineering male character Akobi, Mara’s husband, treats her as a sex commodity and pounces on her like a beast whenever he feels like having sex. Surprisingly, in the couple’s sex lives, Akobi sees her as an object that has no sexual feelings so any time he wants to have sex with her he just beckons her to sleep on the mattress, pounces on her and when he is satisfied he orders her to go back to her room.

Women suffer from lack of understanding from their husbands who inflict unfair, violent and cruel treatment on them. Indeed, no seed of love grows in their marital life. Mara’s psychological violence also comes from the fact that her husband never wants his fellow workers to know that he knows her and more importantly that she is his wife. Akobi blames her as follows: “Don’t you know that if they find out that I know you they will laugh at me?” (p. 26). It is therefore clear that Akobi is ashamed of Mara, his own wife. This is an awkward attitude which further highlights the fact that he considers her as a sex object rather than his wife. The writer makes Mara be his hidden wife so that harmony would prevail in their marriage as revealed in the excerpt below:

I don’t think that all this while we had been living together Akobi had really bothered to take a close look at me in my shabby clothes concealing this extended belly of mine. But that morning he did. And from the look on his face at the bus stop as I waited for my truck and he for his Ministries bus, he didn’t like what he saw. [...], so he would leave with me, but at the station he left a respectable space between us. Then, too, about the time his bus usually arrived he would stretch his neck to see from afar if it was coming. And when he saw it coming he would very quickly and hastily move even farther away from me as if suddenly I was a stink-bomb scheduled to go off soon. When the bus stopped, unlike the first day when he muttered a curt ‘Bye’, he would board it without a look or glance at me. [...]. Above all, he didn’t want the people in the bus to know that I was his wife. (pp. 25-26)



The above excerpt shows that Mara suffers from abandonment and neglect. What makes her psychological burden worse is that she has no news from her husband for two years. The novelist thus shows men's irresponsibility and women's ensuing predicament. Indeed, Mara's fellow-hawkers and the passengers mock at her and hate her due to the carelessness of her husband who has left her with "one old outfit and old tyreslippers" (p. 26). Thanks to that, they have nicknamed her 'boneshaker' which is the nickname of a large passenger lorry. The nickname looks suitable owing to her slippers which are made from the abandoned tyres of these passenger lorries. She endures all the insults that people heap on her; and on hearing them, her anger swells up and her psychological burden gets worse.

Sometimes, husbands are neither loyal nor faithful to their wives. For example, in *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara is victim of her husband's betrayal and unfaithfulness. Akobi spends all his life betraying Mara with a typist at the Ministries, named Comfort. He spends almost all the nights with her and leaves Mara in loneliness and deep thoughts of how to succeed in her marriage. Every day, he comes back home too late or the next morning and leaves Mara without a word of explanation. What upsets her too much is that when Akobi's departure for Europe approaches, he organises a farewell party with his colleagues. It has been a great shock for her as she hears that Akobi has presented Comfort as his woman for life on that occasion. She reveals it in the following quotation:

[...] the gossip had reached my ears that indeed it was a great show-off farewell party, naturally with Akobi as the centre man, but also that while I sat at home he had proudly announced to the giddily excited crowd that this woman, Comfort, who had once given him the cold shoulder, was his woman for life. And as if to confirm it, he left ostentatiously with her to go to her place. So there it was he spent the night and probably too the next day. (p. 41)

The foregoing quotation shows that Akobi inflicts an unbearable psychological violence on his wife. The novelist makes him announce that Comfort is 'his woman for life' to denounce his psychological violence against Mara whom he does not consider as his wife. He abandons his wife, for he makes a trip to Europe and leaves her with no food, no money. So, to earn money to pay Alhaji's monthly rent, and to feed her newly born baby and herself, Mara starts a trade of 'frying pancakes' in the afternoon. Meanwhile, in the morning she attends her sewing lessons and sells sweets and cigarettes in the nights and weekends. Akobi sees Germany or Western countries as paradise on earth, "Heaven itself" (p. 34). As a consequence, he has not hesitated to borrow money and sell the key component of Mara's dowry, which is nothing else but her gold jewellery, which she looks upon as her "only life insurance, the only property [she] owned in life" (p. 31) and her clothes to go to Germany. He hopes to make fortune in Germany so as to build a "beautiful block house" (p. 34) at home. He capitalises on the fact that in "Britain the people are so rich that they throw fridges away" and that in "Germany they throw cars away" (p. 35) to hope that he will succeed in Europe. Although Akobi ill-treats Mara, she is delighted when he sends her a letter from Germany, asking her to rejoin him there. Once in Germany, she is impatient to see her husband. Of course, she imagines romantic love that never exists between them. She thinks that there should be a new development in Akobi's feelings and that he will have affection and sympathy for her. Unfortunately, her dream vanishes when she notices that her husband, Akobi, now Cobby (his German name), has married a new wife, a German woman. While polygamy is tolerated in Africa, Akobi wants Mara to live as his sister, and not as his wife, in Germany where it is not tolerated. As a consequence, Mara unexpectedly faints with dizziness as shown in the following quotation:

' [...]. Mara, I have married a German woman. [...]. But polygamy here is not like polygamy at home. Here polygamy is a crime – they call bigamy. And I can go to prison for it, you understand?' [...]. Look, [...], 'it's quite

simple. Here one man one wife: that is the law. If a man takes more than one wife, he has broken the law. And if you break a law, you pay or go to prison. That is why I can't tell my wife ... my German wife, I mean, that I have another wife. You understand?' (pp. 78-79)

The aforementioned quotation shows that Akobi has opted to indulge in a new marriage with a German woman although he is still married to Mara. Through his attitude, the novelist denounces men's betrayal and unfaithfulness. Since he is still married to Mara, he has made a very bad decision while marrying a German woman. His attitude brings about psychological suffering for Mara. She has a desire that cannot be fulfilled because of the unhappy atmosphere she lives in, namely, her sister role. So, she thinks that the only option she has is to renounce this desire and accept to endure the suffering and the psychological pains. Her strong emotional pain is clearly vivid in the following excerpt:

There was a change that was going on inside me, and my husband Akobi was not seeing it and was still handling me like the poor lowly wife of yesterday. [...].

My husband Akobi didn't consider me as sensitive and intelligent enough to understand and feel this emotional burden he was placing on me. If he thought me so numb, dumb and naïve that he could take my feelings and emotions for granted, then how come at the same time he assumed me capable of convincingly playing this sister role on which his whole fate depended? (p. 90)

The foregoing excerpt shows that Akobi has placed an emotional burden on his wife, Mara, by making her play a sister role. The writer thus shows how indelicate husbands end up telling lies and doing abnormal things such as making their wives feign to be their sisters. Akobi has deceived, betrayed and humiliated Mara by getting married to a German wife. However, rather than showing her displeasure, Mara, once more, plays ball by accepting to pretend being Akobi's sister and maid. Anyway, she seems to have no alternative left insofar as she is a penniless illegal immigrant. She has thus fallen into a vicious circle, and as a result, her "dream evaporated like a drop of coconut oil on a red-hot slab" (p. 74). Since she knows nobody else in Germany, her survival solely depends on Akobi. The fact that Akobi and Gitte (his German wife) make love in her presence makes her predicament worse. All their lovemaking sounds from the bedroom come directly through the living room, especially in the quietness of the night; and all this deepens Mara's emotional pains and makes them worse. She tells us about this sad fact in these terms:

But it still hurt me when I heard him with Gitte in the bedroom making love because, even though polygamy was part of my tradition and I had been brought up to be tolerant of it, a polygamous husband back home always slept with one wife far away, out of the earshot of the others. This is why African wives have their own individual huts in which they lived with their children while the husband had his own hut away from theirs, to which the wives went in turns to sleep with him. But in this small apartment, every sound from the bedroom reached my ears. (p. 112)

The aforementioned quotation reveals that what Mara is witnessing in Germany – the fact that she hears Akobi and his German wife making love – is considered as immoral in Africa. As if this emotional burden were not enough, Akobi makes Mara fall victim to economic exploitation. She works tirelessly and receives nothing from her work. As E. Awitor (2013, p. 180) puts it: "The last straw that buries her dignity is when Akobi brings her to a club at night where she is abused and sexually assaulted by various men and the scene recorded or taped" as proved in the excerpt below:

Then suddenly the room was filled with people, all men, and they were talking and laughing and drinking. And they were completely naked! There must be at least ten men for what I saw were at least twenty images.

Then they were all around me, many hairy bodies, and they were stripping me fondling me, playing with my body, pushing my legs apart, wide, wide apart. As for the rest of the story, I hope that the gods of Naka didn't witness it. (p. 111)

The above excerpt shows that Mara has become an easy prey coveted by many predators. She complains about the situation as follows: "The situation was this: the three of us were watching a video film that showed me completely naked, with men's hands moving all over my body. Then some held my two legs wide apart while one after the other, men, many men, white, black, brown, even one who looked Chinese, took turns upon me" (p. 115). "This video film is used to blackmail her and to force her into the dark and pitiless world of prostitution" (E. Awitor, 2013, p. 181). Akobi has therefore made Mara "a sacrificial lamb" (p. 115) beyond the horizon. So, Mara, the innocent girl from Naka, falls into the "darker side of life" (M. Mwangi, 1973, p. 105) in Hamburg, Germany where she works as a prostitute at Peepy. E. Awitor (2013, p. 176) refers to this fact in these terms: "It is through a flashback that Amma Darko tells the reader how Mara becomes a prostitute in Germany. She comes to Germany at the request of her husband who is living in Hamburg, Germany." L. A. Koussouhon, P. A. Akogbeto and A. A. Allagbe (2015, p. 316) comment on *Beyond the Horizon* in these terms:

Akobi Ajaman is the man Mara is married to. He, like Mara's father, is delineated as deceitful or greedy. He lusts for material wealth so much so that he does not care about how he gets money, the strategies he uses, etc. For him, it is the end that justifies the means, not the contrary. He treats his wife both as a slave and as a source of income. Akobi exploits Mara's sheer innocence for his own selfish ends, turning her into nothing but a mere slave.

More importantly and worse still, the money that Mara earns as a sex worker goes directly into Akobi's bank account. "Mara's naivety, confusion and innocence are rendered by the use of words such as 'flabbergasted', 'baffled', 'perplexed' and 'surprised' which punctuate her statement" (E. Awitor, 2013, p. 181). Mara, herself, refers to her situation in these words: "I was all muddled up. I understood the world no longer" (p. 110). Akobi treats Mara unfairly in order to prevent her from making a fortune from her work. Once in Berlin, he finds her a work as a housemaid for a German family. Unfortunately, Mara declares: "Akobi took the money I earned, as payment for the roof he and Gitte had provided over my head, for my food and transport, for the investment in my trip from home, and for the cost of setting me up for my coming big job" (p. 106). So, Akobi economically exploits her in order to live above all blackness. His doomed fate drives Mara in Munich to make money and to rob her dignity. He fulfils his greed and cowardice by driving Mara's fate in a sex night club called Peepy for prostitution. The protagonist-narrator recounts her blackmail situation in this excerpt:

I am staring painfully at my image. My image? No! – What is left of what once used to be my image. And from my left and right, all about me, I keep hearing chuckles and pantings, wild bedspring creaks, screaming oohs and yelling aahs. They are coming from rooms that are the same as mine, rooms where the same things are done as they are in mine. [...].

I am just in brief silky red underpants, so I'm virtually naked, but that is not why I feel so cold because this coldness I feel does not grip my body so much as it does my soul. It's deep inside me that feels this chilliness, from the dejected soul my body harbours a soul grown own from too much use of its shelter. [...].

Tears are building up in my eyes. [...]. I fear what I see when I look at myself. I shiver at the sight of my sore cracked lips which still show through the multiple layers of the glossy crimson paint I apply to hide them. This

gaudy pink rouge I've plastered on my ebony black face looks horrid, I know, but I wear it because it's the trade mark of my profession. (pp. 1-2)

In the above-mentioned excerpt, it is clear that the situation gets more and more unbearable for Mara. The novelist thus denounces men who financially exploit women through prostitution. She shows how African women suffer from such an ordeal in Europe where they become whores against their will. B. Kammampool (2017, p. 15) comments on the issue of prostitution as follows:

Amma Darko gives a very thorough treatment to the issue of prostitution. The pain, the ritual of taking drugs and the loneliness she feels are some of the consequences of body merchandising. With this text, the novelist tries to explain that Mara's plunging into prostitution has nothing to do with an insatiable libido or spiritual enchantment. It has everything to do with Mara's own psychological need to experience perpetual abuse from men, be it sexually or physically.

With tears in her eyes, sorrow in her heart, and pain in her bosom, it is painful for her to endure the coercion and finally the blackmail. She is devastated when she realises that she works tirelessly and receives none of her earnings, as she complains: "But the money I made for laying men at Peepy, I saw none of it. Pompey was a disciplined businessman [...] who never went back on his contracts. His contract with Akobi was that from the money I made, he would deduct his percentage and deposit the rest in Akobi's private account, of which Gitte knew nothing. Here it was that my whoring profits flowed" (p. 118). This situation is sadly not unique to Mara. Vivian, Kaye and many other African women bear those traits of non-descriptive burden of emotional bitterness and suffering. M. Frias (2002, p. 8) posits: "Darko powerfully denounces and shockingly speaks out for the lives of black women who are traumatically silenced and sexually exploited in the brothels of the western world." She comes to the conclusion that women victims often find a way to reclaim their minds and bodies and their control over financial gain. For instance, Amma Darko makes Mara hire a detective to investigate on Akobi's deals and activities. B. Kammampool (2017, p. 14) corroborates the idea when he declares:

*Beyond the Horizon* interrogates female subjectivity and autonomy against the backdrop of established traditional and modern socio-cultural formations and practices. Mara's first act of awareness was to connive a scheme that will prevent Akobi from siphoning [sic] her money and her second one occurs when she, as an illiterate woman, hires the service of a private detective to extract information on Akobi's financial deals, private arrangements, and properties acquired.

The quotation shows that Mara has become conscious of her predicament and endeavours to retaliate. She tells the detective that she has hired: "Every deal and activity that you are capable of finding out about, I want to know" (p. 133). B. Kammampool (2017, p. 14) buttresses Mara's retaliation in the quotation below:

Armed with this important incriminating information, she resolves to expose her estranged husband and split his liaison with Comfort, her rival and source of her problems. Vengeance in perspective. This marks a remarkable turn of events in the novel. She pulls the situation off successfully. From this, Mara undergoes a powerful psychological development for she is at long last able to take stock of herself. Comfort is deported to Nigeria where she starts a new life with a Nigerian diplomat.

Akobi exploits both Gitte and Mara financially. He uses their money to pay the rent of the whole expensive apartment that Comfort has hired in Hamburg. Moreover, the loan that Akobi and Gitte have contracted to build a house in Africa goes into the financing of his arranged marriage with Comfort and for the renovation of a house in Sumnayi (Comfort's village). Mara is pained deep inside her heart, for herself and for Gitte too; she is drained. This emotional suffering only brings pains and sorrow in her heart as she laments: "I felt drained, so drained that I had to ask for a glass of water. My husband brings me from home to a foreign land and puts me in a brothel to work, and what money I make, he uses to pay the rent on his lover's apartment, and to renovate a home for her in her village back home" (pp. 137-138). Mara compares her plight to Gitte's in the following quotation: "My heart was pained inside me. It was pained inside me for my own self and for Gitte, too. My situation was bad enough but hers was worse still because at least I knew the truth about what I was to Akobi. Here was Gitte at loggerheads with her family because of this same Akobi, who did nothing but cheat on her" (p. 126).

This situation has drawn Gitte into a thoughtful situation full of pity. She sues for a divorce and returns to her family. Her suffering is noticeable: "Everything he (Akobi or rather Cobby) and Gitte owned has been taken by the bank. Gitte has divorced him and returned to her family. [...] she's grown thin with the anxiety but has decided it was luck in misfortune for God only knows how many diets she's tried and failed" (pp. 138-139). So, Gitte bears an emotional burden and suffers too much because of the heartfelt love that she has for Akobi. Her love for him leaves her without a family, for her family members did not want her to marry a foreigner, and worse still a Negro. From the scratch, they said that if she married Akobi, they would have nothing to do with her; and they have kept their word. The only one who secretly sees her is Franz, her little brother. So, Gitte's suffering is related not only to Akobi's loss but also to the way she can reconcile herself with her deserted family. What disgraces her and sharpens her emotional burden is her father's condition; so, she laments: "As for my father, when he heard that I had married a Negro, he started to drink. Now he drinks so much and beats my mother blaming her for not bringing her up properly" (pp. 123-124). Gitte lives in deprivation because her society has rejected her as she expresses it in this excerpt:

Here I am fed up. They call me "Negerweib" everywhere. Even in the factory where I work. And many times too when I must go and do something that involves administration and paperwork; I must hear over and over again, oh, you are married to a foreigner? Ah, a Negro too? I am tired of it, Mara. I want us to work hard together and to finish our house so that we can leave this country behind once and for all. (pp. 124-125).

The foregoing excerpt shows that Gitte's society has ostracised her because she is married to a foreigner who is a Negro. So, she has made a double mistake in the eyes of her people who do not tolerate marriage with a foreigner, worse still with a Negro. She faces psychological violence not only from her divorcee husband, Akobi, but also from her society at large. African women suffer from a lack of understanding from their husbands. Their philosophy of non-renunciation due to the social realities in Africa brings too much suffering in their marital life. Their husbands' disgraceful acts drive them to pain, pity, discomfort and bitterness. All this is due to patriarchy which gives them the power to ill-treat their wives. B. Kammampool (2017, p. 2) buttresses the principal male characters' worthlessness and irresponsibility in Amma Darko's works in these terms:

Amma Darko, through her narrative, exhibits powerful anti-patriarchal tendencies and attempts to deconstruct and demolish the patriarchal status quo by reducing men to worthless and irresponsible beings; ranging from grotesque images to wicked husbands as well as fathers in her effort to establish a new social order in which she believes

women will be in control of their common destiny. The result of her endeavour is that none of the men she features in her fictional works is a man of honour. The principal male characters are, to a greater extent, irresponsible fathers as well as husbands, drunkards, rapists, exploiters, predators and monsters. They are described to the reader as people who do not care about the general social malaise and moral decadence inherent in the society where they live but are in the main congenital and pathological predators, sexually depraved, perverse and evil. In the patriarchal society where she is born and raised, her fellow women are often victims of rape, assault; abandonment by their male counterparts, of betrayal, of economic exploitation due to obnoxious cultural practices. This master-servant relationship leads women to live in perpetual fear, trauma, suffering and eventually death.

Indeed, women accept to suffer not only to preserve their womanliness but also to abide by patriarchal norms. Such a situation leads to their total submission to their husbands. This submission, in turn, leads to domestic violence which forcibly has an impact on women.

### IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON WOMEN

The lives of women victims of domestic violence become hard because their husbands expose them to physical and psychological torture. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara's life is affected because Akobi regularly slaps her. She says: "I scurried into one corner and slumped on the floor, my burning face buried in my hands. I understood the world any more" (p. 11). However, patriarchal society defends wives against their husbands' ill-treatment, maltreatment, abuse, and violation of women's rights. Patriarchal society suggests that if the husband maltreats his wife and she packs back to her parents, he should lose both his wife and the bride price. In this connection, Mara has the full right to run away from her marital house to save her life because of the domestic violence that she daily endures. However, one may say that she lacks information; that is why she gives up her decision to resort to divorce, believing that her father should have to refund her bride price if she sues for a divorce. For example, Gitte divorces and gets Akobi imprisoned for the emotional burden that he has heaped on her and which has led her to trauma. The feminist critical approach which aims at valorising women's image is applied here. Its relevance lies in the fact that Akobi has met Gitte who has ended up sending him to prison because of his abuse of women. B. Kammampol (2017, p. 15) refers to A. Darko as follows:

Although no attempt is made to label Amma Darko as a radical feminist, her commitment to finding solutions to women and children's problems draws her close to many female writers in this instance. Significantly, Mara's unbreakable friendship with Gitte, Vivian, Kaye and Mama Kiosk can be seen as a deliberate attempt by Darko to suggest that one of the ways to attain women's emancipation from the shackles of patriarchy is through sisterhood—a bond unbreakable by race, education, colour, religion or geographical differences. This type of solidarity is a landmark of African feminism.

Indeed, the victims of domestic violence do not understand the world. They may drain in deep unconsciousness, and lapse into trauma. On the other hand, they may get thinner and thinner, sometimes plunging into mental disorder or disability and even end up committing suicide. Referring to black women's objectification, D. Chukwuemeka (2019, p. 145) writes: "Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* engages the power dynamics of [...] gender relation in a provocative narrative that metaphorically represents and resists the embodied objectification of the black female body as an element of female sexual experience." African feminism is an incentive for black women's rescue from objectification. D. M. Ugwanyi (2017, p. 49) corroborates the idea when he declares:

African feminism [...] seeks to give the woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual and contributing being, while it rejects stereotypes of women that deny her a positive identity. In respect to feminism, a lot is discussed in African literature, such as: the representation and misrepresentation of women in literary texts; the education of women; the access of women to the economic means of survival; motherhood; women in the domestic sphere; women as part of their communities; women's role in politics and revolution; sexuality; and the direct treatment of women by men, and men by women.

In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara says: "Naturally, not all husbands make wrecks to their wives. Many women in Naka were extremely content with their marriage and their husbands wouldn't exchange them for anything in the world" (p. 4). Through this quotation, it is clear that parents should be selective on their daughters' husbands. They should make a deep background scrutiny in order to guarantee a peaceful marital life to their daughters. B. Kammampool (2017, p. 15) evokes "[...] the ways in which language, deeds, and acts are used by the novelist to develop womanish characters [...] capable of overcoming the limitations of their position in spaces that confine and silence them within domestic realms and beyond." Therefore, women should strive themselves to challenge the odds and raise to the occasion. Feminism is geared toward the resolution of gender-based dissensions. As D. M. Ugwanyi (2017, p. 50) puts it: "While feminism has to do with the struggle for equality with men and for equal representation in society; it is also against male-established institutions such as cultural and traditional institutions which are constructed and designed to favour men and hoodwink women."

*Beyond the Horizon* opens with the confession and introspection of Mara, the protagonist-narrator, as she is looking at herself in an oval mirror in a brothel in Germany where she is forced into prostitution. Her image or rather "what is left of what once used to be my [her] image" (p. 1) reveals dejected and a wrecked body, a body "misused and abused by strange men" (p. 1). Needless to say, these quotations unveil the physical and psychological violence which Mara is subjected to and her impossibility to break the chains of her enslavement. "Friendless, isolated and cold" (p. 1), she is also 'naked' in all the senses of the term. Her predicament is devastating and inhumane. Her nakedness and her isolation show her fragility and vulnerability because she is defenceless. Referring to Amma Darko's denunciation of women's plight in the novel, I. A. Ngwaba (2019, p. 113) says: "This illustrates the sense of loss and despair experienced by then aïve and transformed Mara. Despite all [the money] she makes from prostitution, she still considers herself as being broken, used and abused. She further exposes the predicament of most women who are being used as objects of pleasure and discarded afterwards." When she stares painfully at her image in the mirror or "this bit of garbage that once used to be me [her]" (p. 3), she reflects on her transformation from an obedient and subservient Ghanaian woman into a wretched prostitute. Looking at her devastated figure and body, she cannot help crying bitterly because she "fear[s] what [she] see[s]" (p. 2). She laments:

Tears are building up in my eyes. They always do when I stare at what is left of me. They are blurring my vision and are rolling down my face in agonising rhythm like the beating of the devil's own drums ...ta ...ta ...ta ...dropping down one after the other, painfully slow, painfully gradual, onto these two flappy, floppy drooping things I call my breasts, my tired graceless bosom. I fear what I see when look at myself. [...] I may be dirty, old and overused but I can still feel emotions. And that is why I cry sometimes. And when I've got my crying to do I sit here alone before my large oval mirror and stare painfully at this bit of garbage that once used to be me and I cry. (pp. 1-3)



The above-mentioned quotation reveals the extent of Mara's devastation due to the physical and psychological violence that she has undergone. She is worn out and dejected by the atrocities that she has suffered not only in Africa but also in Europe. Referring to her predicament, E. Awitor (2013, pp. 175-176) writes:

It is worth mentioning that the rhythm of her tears which sounds like "the beating of the devil's own drums" and the use of anaphora "painfully" and its repetition (it occurs thrice in the quotation above) uncloak her doom and her suffering. Moreover, her breasts that are now "flappy, floppy and droopy" and compared to "things" show her decrepitude which without doubt is beyond retrieval. She becomes "a bit of garbage" ready to welcome any kind of dumped waste: she is dehumanized.

E. Awitor's stand in the foregoing quotation clearly shows that the various types of violence that Mara has endured have had a serious impact on her. Her pain becomes more vivid and searing when she ponders over the situation in which she finds herself and over the disgusting bruises on her body. As a result of Akobi's brutal assaults on her, she ends up having her little finger "bent. Its bone's been displaced and it looks weird" (p. 2). In addition, as she thinks of her mother she wonders:

What my poor mother back home in black Africa would say to these hideous traces of bites and scratches all over my neck, should she ever have the misfortune of seeing them, I fear to imagine. They extend even far beyond the back of my ears, several bruises and scars left generously there by the sadistic hands of my best payers, my best spenders. And even back down my spine too run a couple more – horrendous ones which I fortunately do not suffer the distaste of seeing vividly like those on my neck, and so I care less about them. (p. 2)

As revealed in the aforementioned excerpt, what Mara's mother would say about the hideous traces of bites and scratches all over her neck haunts her and this constitutes an impact of her. Because Mara is stripped of her dignity, she fails to go back home lest she should be ostracised and she is consequently "stuck with Oves for the rest of my [her] life" (p. 139). According to her, "Home will have to remain a distant place" (p. 139) because she fears that the sex videos that Akobi has made of her will show up if she goes back home. Stuck in Munich, she opts to sink completely into prostitution and drug addiction so as to earn more money. She refers to this fact in the quotation below:

At Oves' brothel, I have plunged into my profession down to the marrow in my bones. There is no turning back for me now. I am so much a whore now that I can no longer remember or imagine what being a non-whore is. I have problems recollecting what I was like before I turned into what I am now. I think a lot about my mother and my two sons. Recently I started getting so sad with the thought of them that I began pleasing my men less. And that nearly landed me in trouble with Oves [...]. So when I am down, when any of us is feeling down, Oves gives us 'snow' to sniff, to make us high. Now I can't go through a day without sniffing 'snow'. I am hooked on it. I am fast sinking into a place hotter than hell. (p. 139)

The above quotation shows that Mara's plight is irreversible. She has reached a point where there is no possibility for her to retreat. E. Awitor (2013, p. 182) is therefore right when he writes: "What makes Mara's suffering more excruciating is her knowledge that she will never succeed in bringing her head out of the water into which she is sinking irretrievably." Before she completely sinks, she has taken an important precaution which she unveils as follows: "I have issued instructions to them [my parents] to find a small cement house in town which I can buy for my two kids, so that when I sink too deep beyond help they will at least have a decent place to lay their heads" (p. 140). "By sending material things home, Mara, unknowingly, perpetuates this 'Verkaufte Traum' (the German title of Amma Darko's novel *Beyond*

*the Horizon*, which literally means 'The Vending Dream') which cannot be reached by everyone" (E. Awitor, 2013, p. 182).

"Mara's own lie that she is making it good in Europe working in an African restaurant, cannot redeem her from the life of shame and abuse she is condemned to at Ove's brothel" (K. Anyidoho, 2003, p. 10). In addition, it "nurtures and sends other aspiring immigrants into the lion's mouth. And yet, are her society and family ready to welcome her if they discover her true story and the hell in which most immigrants live in Europe?" E. Awitor (2013, pp. 182-183). "Where Mara's tragedy lies is that she is stuck in a 'place hotter than hell' and victim of Akobi's greed and selfishness and her family/society's great expectations and yet nobody will believe her when she decides to break the taboo and tell the truth about her nightmare" (E. Awitor, 2013, p.183). "Through Mara's story, Amma Darko brings forth and denounces the plight of many women who are subjugated and live in sub-human bondage" (E. Awitor, 2013, p.183). As A. Ngwaba (2019, p. 115) puts it: "Mara finds herself in a depressing situation and cannot go back to her father's house because she will not be welcomed; her father cannot afford to return her bride price. Her situation could be regarded as a double tragedy for being torn between two worlds." Mara herself confesses this fact as follows:

The situation was utterly depressing, the more so because I had yet to make friends with the occupants of the other shelters. And even though the thought of returning to the village crossed my mind, I knew it was something I could never do. Not only would I not be welcomed back into the family, but father would never be able to afford to refund my dowry, much of which he'd already squandered. So, come what may, I was stuck with the flies and the blood-sucking war the mosquitoes had declared on us. I was soon to discover that these would not be my only headache. (pp. 8-9)

The above-mentioned excerpt clearly shows that Mara is exposed to malaria and other dangers because of her husband's irresponsibility. However, she cannot leave him because of his father's inability to return her bride price. Unless her father liberates her by abiding by the traditional norm which demands the refunding of the bride price before a woman can divorce, she will remain Akobi's wife.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article has been to examine critically and to expose domestic violence and its impact on women through the novel under study. It has dealt with three sections, namely the causes of domestic violence against women, physical and emotional violence against women, and the impact of domestic violence on women. The research work has disclosed the causes of domestic violence against women, the different forms of domestic violence that men inflict on women and the ensuing consequences. The study has found that domestic violence has an impact on women's lives and needs to be eradicated. The novelist has used many literary techniques, including flashback to convey his message. He has succeeded in impacting his readership by drawing his readers' attention to the drawbacks of domestic violence against women. The findings of the study clearly show that domestic violence is a bad practice which seriously affects women and society at large.

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